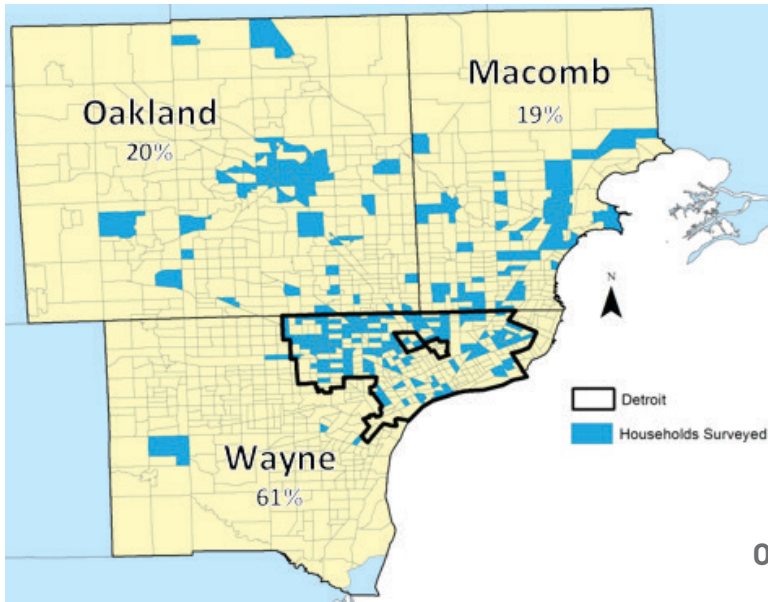




HOUSEHOLD WATER SECURITY IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT: MEASURING THE AFFORDABILITY GAP

A research team from The University of Michigan’s School for Environment and Sustainability did a study on low-income residents’ experiences with water in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties to give a regional picture of water access and affordability.

WHO PARTICIPATED

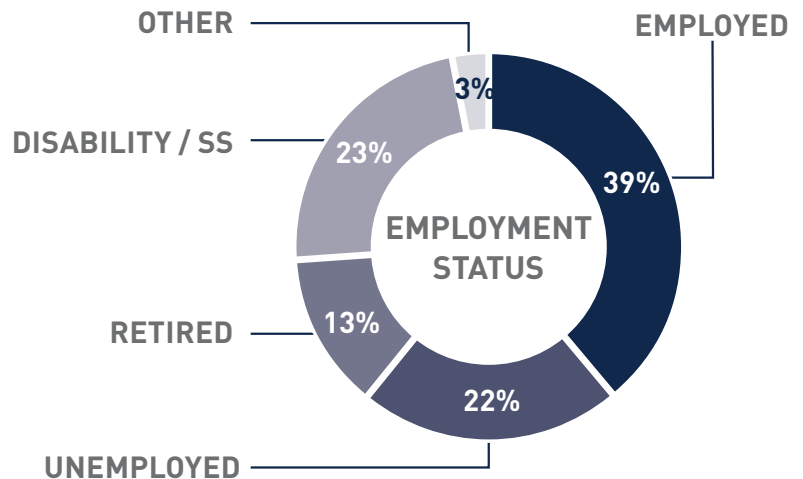


Data Source: Michigan GIS Open Data & U.S. Census Bureau

413 HOUSEHOLDS
2.6 PEOPLE/HOUSEHOLD ON AVG

39%
of households surveyed had children under the age of 18

11%
were home to seniors over the age of 65



\$98.61
AVERAGE WATER BILL

Surveyed households are paying on-average 10% of their monthly income for water and sewer service.

74 of the households surveyed have had their water shut-off in the past two years.

WHAT WE FOUND

WATER AND WASTEWATER BILLS ARE UNAFFORDABLE ACROSS THE REGION.

10%: Percentage of income on-average that goes to water and sewer service at surveyed households.

4.5%: Percentage of income the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers an affordable water bill.

PEOPLE VALUE WATER AND ARE WILLING TO PAY WHAT THEY CAN AFFORD.

\$98.61 reported average monthly water and wastewater bill \longrightarrow **\$53.53** amount respondents said they could afford to pay = **\$45.08 AFFORDABILITY GAP** between what people are paying and what they can afford each month. It adds up to **\$540.96** a year.

That extra \$45.08/month could pay for any one of the following:

- 22 bus rides
- 1 month of antibiotics
- 4 weeks of diapers
- 1 backpack with a pencil case full of markers, crayons & pencils
- 19 meals for the average low income family








Only 1.4% of residents said they expected free water.

RESIDENTS ARE MAKING TRADE-OFFS TO PAY THEIR BILLS.

51% of residents reported switching between paying their energy and water bill.

84% of residents reported cutting back on monthly expenses to pay their water bill.

Where people cut back on monthly expenses

 RENT OR PROPERTY TAX	 TRANSPORTATION	 MEDICINE	 MEDICAL OR DENTAL CARE	 FRESH PRODUCE	 CLOTHES	 SCHOOL SUPPLIES
84%	68%	38%	47%	63%	82%	60%

ASSISTANCE IS HELPING, BUT IS NOT CLOSING THE AFFORDABILITY GAP.

79.1% of residents enrolled in assistance programs are still paying more than 4.5% of their income.

94.3% of residents receiving assistance are still cutting back on monthly expenses.

Residents enrolled in assistance programs reported that they were 13% less likely to struggle to pay their bills at least some of the time.